

REMARKS

There remains pending in this application claims 1-6 and 8-12, of which claim 1 is independent. No claims have been added or cancelled.

In view of the above amendments and the following remarks, favorable reconsideration and allowance of the above application is respectfully sought.

Claims 3-5, 8, and 11 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which Applicants regard as the invention. As the Examiner will appreciate, claim 3 has been amended to change "said rotary member" to --said rotary members-- and claim 8 has been amended to clarify that the shutter is retractable in a direction perpendicular to the sheet feeding direction.

Applicants have also amended claim 11 to eliminate reference to an instruction portion and more clearly define it as a selecting portion by which a user selects a mode in which the bundle of sheets aligned by the aligning operation is not automatically fed after the aligning operation by the aligning portion. Given such amendments, Applicants submit that claim 11 meets all the requirements of §112, second paragraph, and that the rejection thereunder should now be withdrawn.

Independent claim 1 is directed to a sheet feeding apparatus which has a sheet supporting stand for supporting a bundle of sheets in an erect posture, a sheet feeding portion which feeds the bundle of sheets, a pressure portion which thrusts the bundle of sheets toward the sheet feeding portion during feeding by the feeding portion, an aligning portion which vibrates the bundle of sheets upwards and downwards and moves the bundle of sheets in a feeding

direction while supporting the bundle of sheets at at least two rotations, and a hitting portion arranged to be hit against by leading edges of the bundles of sheets moved by the aligning portion. The invention as recited in claim 1 is now characterized in that the pressure portion is moved so as to weaken a pressing force exerted on the bundle of sheets during the aligning operations of said aligning portion.

Independent claim 1, as well as claims 2, 6, and 12, were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b), as being anticipated by Nahar et al. (U.S. Patent No. 4,295,645). The rejection is respectfully traversed.

Thus, as recited in claim 1, there is a sheet feeding apparatus in which as a bundle of sheets supported in erect posture by a sheet supporting stand is thrust forward by a sheet feeding portion, an aligning portion vibrates the bundle of sheets upward and downward while supporting the bundle of sheets at at least two locations of the sheet supporting stand to move the bundle of sheets in a sheet feeding direction to a hitting portion so as to align the bundle of sheets. When the aligning operation of the bundle of sheets is performed, the pressure portion is retracted so as to weaken the pressing force exerted on the bundle of sheets, thus making it possible to prevent the pressing force by which the pressure portion presses the bundle of sheets against the feeding portion from disturbing the up and down vibration of the bundle of sheets, and thus it is possible to avoid a failure in alignment.

As discussed previously, Nahar et al. (U.S. Patent No. 4,295,645) is directed to a hopper for feeding documents automatically into a sorter and provides for a roller extending through a slot along a wall is used to urge the ends of the documents downward and forward towards feeder nudger belts which feed them to the sorter and spring bias flag pushed against one

end of the stack of documents to urge them in the same direction against the feeder nudger belts. Nahar et al. does feature the vibration of a bundle of sheets vertically by rollers R4,R6, as well as the urging of the bundle of sheets against the conveying belt 46 by a flag F. However, the flag F is always urged against the conveying belt 46 by the force of a spring. More specifically, the flag F always urges the bundle of sheets during an aligning operation of the bundle of sheets and there is no disclosure or suggestion of the pressure portion being moved to a position in which the pressure portion does not hinder an aligning operation. As such, Nahar et al. does not disclose or even suggest the invention as recited in independent claim 1 where the pressure portion is moved so as to weaken a pressing force exerted on the bundle of sheets during the aligning operation.

Applicants have reviewed the remaining art of record and respectfully submit that none of those references meet the shortcomings of Nahar et al. Accordingly, whether taken individually or in combination, the art of record does not anticipate or render obvious the invention of claim 1.

The remaining claims in the above application, namely claims 2-6 and 8-12, are dependent claims which depend either directly or indirectly from claim 1 and are therefore patentable over the art of record for reasons noted above with respect to claim 1. In addition, each recite features of the invention still further distinguishing it from the applied art. Favorable and independent consideration thereof is respectfully sought.

Applicants respectfully submit that all outstanding matters in the above application have been addressed and that this application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration and early passage to issue of the above application are respectfully sought.

Applicants' undersigned attorney may be reached in our Washington, D.C. office by telephone at (202) 530-1010. All correspondence should continue to be directed to our below listed address.

Respectfully submitted,



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